

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

February 23, 1999

Idaho Certifies First Six Court Interpreters After Comprehensive National Testing

Effort Helps Insure that Non-English Speaking Citizens Have Access to Courts

(Boise) -- An ever growing number of non-English speaking citizens find themselves in Idaho courtrooms as plaintiffs, defendants or witnesses, and now for the first time the Idaho Supreme Court and the United States District Court have certified court interpreters to facilitate translation and interpretation of court proceedings.

Six interpreters have become the first in Idaho to successfully complete a series of rigorous examinations that are administered by the national Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification.

"It is a fundamental requirement of our legal system that every citizen have access to our courts and to justice. Justice must not be denied because a citizen is unable to speak or understand English," said Idaho Chief Justice Linda Copple Trout.

Trout said the 1998 session of the Idaho Legislature provided an appropriation of \$30,000 that permitted Idaho to become only the twelfth state in the nation to join the interpreter consortium. The legislative action also supported Idaho educational workshops for court interpreters. Last year more than 100 interpreters participated in workshops.

Idaho law requires that when a participant in a legal proceeding is not able to understand or speak English that "the court shall appoint a qualified interpreter to interpret the proceedings." Trout said the need for court appointed interpreters is growing rapidly, and that Idaho courts at the state and federal levels are committed to meeting the need with qualified interpreters.

"Idaho is truly among the nation's leaders in recognizing this need and moving to address it. It is clear that we need certified interpreters in every judicial district in Idaho, and we often find that we need more than one at a time," Trout said.

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The predominate need in Idaho is for Spanish interpretation although a significant number of cases require interpretation from other languages or for assistance for the hearing impaired.

The six certified interpreters undertook a rigorous examination that included sections on ethics, simultaneous interpreting, consecutive interpreting, and sight translation.

The six newly certified interpreters are:

- **James Comstock**, Rigby
- **Karen Cormack**, Meridian
- **Delia Gonzalez**, Caldwell
- **Shirley Watson**, Ontario, Oregon
- **Katherine Watson-Parks**, Fruitland
- **Mica Wilson**, Marsing

Additional interpreter workshops and the next round of examinations will be scheduled later this year.

Additional information about the Idaho effort to enhance court interpreter services is available from:

Judge Sergio Gutierrez, Chair of the Courts Fairness and Equality Committee --
208-454-7370.

Patti Tobias, Administrative Office of the Court -- 208-334-2246

Cameron Burke, Clerk of the U.S. District Court -- 208-334-1361

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